

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: ANTHONY R. TALARICO
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT GABRIELSKY
DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 1989**

**R = ROBERT
A = ANTHONY**

SG-NA-T045

Tape begins with a briefing from interviewer:

Robert Gabrielsky speaking for the Shifting Gears Project, The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts. We're in my office at the Western Gateway Heritage State Park in North Adams, Massachusetts. And today I am interviewing Tony Talarico. Talarico? Correct? [T: Right] Just a minute. I'm going to run things back and see if we're recording okay.

R: Okay. Ready to start. Your name is Tony Talarico. Um, where are your grandparents from?

A: They were from a small town in Southern Italy, Calabria.

R: Calabria, uh huh. Uh, (--)

A: There are many uh (--)

R: All four grandparents, or?

A: Yeah. [R: Umhm] Yeah. Uh, there are many people in North Adams whose grandparents were uh (--)

R: Were from Calabria?

A: Were from the small town of [Creaky?]. It's a very small village. [R: Uh huh] And uh (--)

R: What's the population?

A: Well the population, my folks always compared it to Greylock. It's a small community.

[Phone rings] [R: Uh huh] Uh, there is Tony [unclear], his family. Well he was born here, but his folks came from this little town, [Canenos?], Spagnolis, [Marantis?], [Motina?], there's others that I can't think of right now, but there are quite a few. [R: Uh huh] [Calabres?]

R: Right, right. Uh huh. Um, and uh, so did they come to the United States, or did your parents?

A: My parents.

R: Your parents did. [A: Yeah] Uh huh. Um, and uh, what did your parents do?

A: Well my father was a fine custom tailor in [unclear]. [R: Uh huh] He could make a suit from a piece of cloth. Measure it out, cut it and sew it.

R: So he worked for himself?

A: He had a little tailor shop where [unclear] is now, on 9 Holden Street.

R: Uh huh. Um, how did he get this craft, do you know?

A: Well it was uh, he was apprenticed in Italy. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And then he uh, back in about 1938 he went to work for the House of [unclear]. And he really had people coming from all over the country to have suits made by him.

R: Right. Right.

A: They did a, he did a great job. He made suits from Cole Porter I believe.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, so uh, when, when were you born?

A: 1914.

R: And when did your parents come to the United States?

A: Well my mother came I think in 1910. And my father in 1912. [R: Uh huh] And they were married here.

R: Uh huh. So you were born shortly after they were married? Yeah. Um, and where, where did you grow up exactly? I mean in what neighborhood?

A: Well I was born where the Saint Anthony's parish center is now. And uh, I've lived most of my life with the exception of the forties in uh, in North Adams. I worked for a short while in the uh, for the Civil Service Commission in Washington. And then I spent about three years in the Service. [R: Uh huh] And then I came back to North Adams in 1950, '49, 50.

R: Um, where did you go to school?

A: I went to Drury and then I went to Bryant College in Providence.

R: Uh huh. Did you graduate from college? Do you have a BA?

A: Yeah. Well we have, we have BS and BA, business administration.

R: Uh huh. So you have a Bachelor Science in Business Administration? Uh huh. Um, when did you uh, when did you go to college? What period was this when you went to college?

A: Well I left Drury, I mean I left uh, the Arnold Print Works and went to Providence in 1936.

R: So you uh, you were working at Arnold Print Works while you were in school, or afterwards?

A: No, after.

R: In other words this was after you graduated from high school you worked in Arnold Print Works. Well was this to save money, or just, you didn't feel like going to college, or what?

A: Well in those days not too many people went to college. It was the middle of the depression.

R: Yeah, I'm surprised you went at all with the [unclear]?

A: Well the way we worked it, my younger brother went first. And we all worked to send him to school. Then he graduated in '36, [R: Uh huh, then it was your turn] from Bryant and then it was my turn. There were three, we were three boys. And uh, he stayed in Providence and found a job. It was very unusual. [Phone rings]

R: Excuse me. Go ahead.

A: We boarded at 95 Benevolent Street right near Brown University. And uh Bryant was just a couple of block from there. And uh, he got a job with a Car Loading Forwarding Company. And even though he had been to college he was on making fifteen, sixteen dollars at the at time. We were paying rent, board, board and room, fifteen dollars for the two of us. So we split fifty-cents a piece for spending money. Then we had (--)

R: Uh huh. For a week?

A: Per week, yup. Then we go, he got a little raise. So eventually he got a car and we went all around Rhode Island. Providence was a nice place. We liked it then.

R: What motivated you to go to that school?

A: I don't know. I don't remember what happened, or what. I think the school had at that time salesman going around and (--)

R: Oh, they were advertising ?

A: Yeah, yeah.

R: Uh huh. Um, this really is true um, very few um, very few people were attending college in the 1930's. Um, did you (--)

A: Well this was strictly a business school, very strong. They had uh, I thought and I still do, very fine business courses. [R: Uh huh] And in later years it became a little more liberal. [R: Uh huh] More liberal arts courses.

R: Umhm. Umhm. Um, but you did go away to school after all. I mean you were very, there were probably commercial colleges or business schools that were closer nearby. [A: Yeah] The prestige of going away to school, there is something involved in that.

A: Well I don't remember.

R: Um, did (--) Um, as I say, I think it's peculiar for, for almost anyone to have gone to even a business college in the 1930's. Uh, do you think that there was uh, in your immediate community how was it looked upon that you went to college?

A: Well I don't, I didn't notice anything really.

R: Uh huh. Nobody took particular notice of it.

A: Well even when you got through college that didn't mean that you were going to get a good job the way you do today. Uh, I was making fourteen dollars a week [R: At Arnold's] when I worked at Arnold Print Works. Then I tried to find jobs in Boston and I couldn't find anything. They were paying at that time five dollars a week for junior accountants so that they could work towards their CPA. [R: Yeah] Well five dollars a week for a man to live in Boston just couldn't make it. [R: Right] And besides that you couldn't find a job even for five dollars a week. And I went to uh, New York City and I was there for awhile. And I couldn't find anything. And in fact one employment agency was very blunt and says that uh, uh, he didn't know who placed the Italian. [R: Uh huh] But uh, he didn't, he couldn't. You know, he was very blunt. So I came home and I found a little book keeping job right across the street from the Arnold Print Works. And when I started there I made one dollar a week more than I did, two dollars a week more than when I did after going away to school. And then I had to dress up, work [R: right, it cost more] six days a week. Uh, I was working forty-four hours instead of forty. And it almost didn't make sense. [R: Uh huh] But it worked out. You know, I mean I was very happy that I had gone. When I went into the service I got into finance because of my schooling. So that was one good advantage.

R: Did (--) How often did you come back home here when you were away at school?

A: Well the school there didn't have the vacations the way we have here. For example, we started the day after Labor Day. We worked until, we called it work and that's what I think it

was until the Wednesday afternoon we got off before Thanksgiving. [R: Right] We went back the following Monday. [R: Right] We were out just about two week for the Christmas holidays. No quite two weeks. [R: Uh huh] Then we didn't have anymore time off until Easter. And then Easter it was only about three days.

R: Right. It may be the Friday the Easter, before Easter, yeah.

A: [Unclear] And this is uh, we'd come home then. And then I hitchhiked so I could get home.

R: You hitchhiked then?

A: Usually, yeah.

R: Uh huh. Uh huh. Many cars on the road then? [A: Hm?] Many cars on the road? People pick you up, or?

A: Well they'd pick you up, but there weren't that many cars in those days. [R: Yeah] I remember standing on some corners for about an hour waiting for a ride. [R: Yeah] You know, there were very few cars. [R: Right, right. Umhm] And then it was an odd route that we had to take from Providence.

R: Right. Uh huh, uh huh. Um, did you enjoy school?

A: I love it, yeah. [R: Yeah?] I did uh, I was top in my class. I did well in my studies, but I wasn't that great on the social activity end of it.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, (--)

A: Which was worked out I feel to my disadvantage, you know. I should have [rest of comment unclear]

R: It would have helped if you'd had been more socially active. [A: Yeah] It would have helped your career.

A: I think so. [R: Yeah, umhm] I think so.

R: Um, what was your favorite subject?

A: Uh, accounting. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] Accounting. I liked that. It was very analytical. It was good.

R: Yeah. Um, so what was the first job you ever held in your life? What was the circumstances of your getting it?

A: The first job [R: first job] was in the Arnold Print Works.

R: That was after, and that was after high school huh? You didn't work until you graduated from high school?

A: No, I didn't work then. I used to work for my father. I forgot that. [R: In the, in the] In the tailor shop. I used to do the pressing. [R: Uh huh] Uh, press the clothes. And that was it.

R: So then you graduated from Drury High School, and immediately upon graduating you got the job, or?

A: No, because of the times, and I was young, I didn't get to work until about three years later I'd say. Two years later. [R: Uh huh] Uh, 1933. There was a couple of years before I went to work. Couldn't find the jobs. In fact I remember walking to uh, with three other men to Greylock. They had a Greylock Fine Spinning Company. And three of us had graduated from high school, and the fourth hadn't. He had worked in some, uh, Hoosic Cotton Mill. And uh, he was the only one offered a job and needed to take it. I don't know why. It was real, real odd.

R: You walked from where? To (--)

A: From here to Greylock. We thought it was a great, you know.

R: And how long after you had graduated was this?

A: Oh, about a year or so afterwards.

R: Uh huh. So you didn't work for sometime. You couldn't find work. [A: No, no, no.] What did you do with your time?

A: Well I worked a little bit with my father, you know. And he had to have suits pressed, or delivered. I tried to do his little bookkeeping that he had, but there were a lot of us in the same, same position. You know, we couldn't just, couldn't find the work.

R: You didn't have any money then?

A: Well no, but I wonder. We didn't seem to need it, or something. [R: Uh huh] We got by. I don't quite understand how we did it, but uh.

R: Did you, did you go out on dates, or to dances, or anything like that, or?.

A: Well, no. I didn't do too much of that.

R: Uh huh. Uh huh.

A: Though after I went to work we used to, all the young people from North Adams seem to head for Hoosic Falls. [R: Uh huh] And uh, on Saturday nights. And they had dancing there.

R: Um, what did you do? I mean you know, you worked a little bit for your father. Well I mean

if you weren't doing that forty hours a week, or whatever, and you didn't have much money, how did you pass your time? How did you spend your time?

A: Hang around the street and wonder, what is there to do, you know? That was the other thing I'll never understand. It always seems when we were young time hung heavy on our hands. And now I don't have enough time. [R: Right. Uh huh] But I used to go hunting too.

R: I noticed that too. [A: Huh?] I noticed that too. [Both laughing]

A: I used to go hunting quite a bit.

R: So you [excelsior?] see all over again.

A: Yeah, yeah. I have less and less time.

R: You used to go hunting.

A: Then I used to go hunting and hiking quite a bit.

R: How can you afford the bullets?

A: Well I didn't do that much shooting. I used to like to you know, get a rabbit or something like that. And my mother would be happy because she liked it. Well in those days did a lot of hunting for meat.

R: There was a lot of game around too.

A: Yeah.

R: Where did you go?

A: I used to go uh, let's see, North western part of the city here.

R: Uh huh.

A: Up towards [Bear Swamp?]

R: Uh huh. Used a shot gun, or uh ?

A: Yeah, with a shot gun. Yeah. Umhm. A little 20 gauge that I still have.

R: Um, were you uh, did you tend church?

A: I went to Saint Anthony's Church, yes.

R: Uh huh. Um, (--)

A: You know it used to be crowded.

R: Uh huh. Did um, did most of the uh, most of the Italians in that community, did they, is that the church they went to, or did they go a church?

A: Oh yeah. They, it was very crowded there. They had four, four masses, or five masses.

R: Uh huh.

A: It was a small church on Holden Street and quite often people were outside. You know, the church was just jammed. And that's why they always talked about building a new church. And then they finally built this right where it is now, about thirty years ago.

R: Right, right. And you've always attended that church? [A: Yeah] Uh huh. Um, but you never went to parochial school, grammar school, or (--)

A: They had uh, Saint Anthony's had a small parochial school on Webber Avenue. And that was right across from a shoe factory. And they had right up to the fourth grade. [R: Uh huh] And I was there in the fourth grade the last year that they had it and then they closed it down. Um, that's quite a few years ago. That was in the twenties.

R: Uh huh. Well they had several parochial schools in town, didn't they?

A: Well they had the french school and then they had Saint Joseph's.

R: Saint Joseph's, right. Yeah. Uh, the french school, they taught in french there at the school?

A: Yeah, I understand that they did.

R: Yeah, uh huh. What is that? When did these shut down? Do you remember when they shut down?

A: Which one, the french? [R: Yeah] No, I don't remember that.

R: How about Saint Joe's, do you remember that?

A: Well it was a few years ago. Not too long ago that they closed Saint Joseph's.

R: Um, okay. So your first job was at the Arnold Print Works. What was the circumstances of (--) You had been out of work for a year or so after getting out of high school.

A: Well it's very odd about the Arnold Print Works. The town of North Adams I don't believe felt the real debts of the depression that other cities did. For example, Pittsfield, because of the Arnold Print Works. The Arnold Print Works worked night and day for years during the thirties. And uh, but there was a lot of competition for the jobs.

R: Sprague too probably. Sprague comes in right as the depression is started. I think that must have been(--)

A: Well they, they started up the Beaver. [R: Right] And they, I think they were very low paying jobs. And they promised them the moon and you know, [R: right, right] did quite awhile. But the Arnold Print Works as I say, was working twenty-four hours a day.

R: They had three shifts.

A: Yeah. No, they only had two shifts.

R: Twelve hour, yeah.

A: Fourteen hours some of them. I worked up to fourteen hours a night. I went on nights. Well the reason I got in there was because one of the supers of, superintendents of one section of the finishing section had his suits made by my father. So my father kept after him and he finally gave me a job. And that's how I was able to get a job there. And uh, I'd go to work either five or six o'clock at night until seven o'clock in the morning. And those days to job wasn't that hard, it was just time consuming. And they didn't give you any time to uh, eat. You ate as you worked when you had a little time. I was a young man who used to eat a lot then.

R: So you didn't get a lunch break or anything?

A: No. Uh, but what we used to do sometimes, especially on a Saturday night, bring in some hot sausage. [R: Uh huh] Where we worked, where I worked was where they put the finish on the cloth. In other words they did, the cloth would not be the highest grade, but the uh, foreman there no how to mix, had formulas for different clothes to put sizing on it. So that when it came out the other end you'd never think it was the same piece of cloth, you know. It would be heavier and felt much better. But of course it wasn't that great, because the minute you washed it that sizing, that filling would come out. Well it had to go through rollers, which would put the uh, sort of a container of this fluid with this sizing in, and through rollers, and then through this hot box which would dry it. They had steam pipes under the cloth and we'd put a sausage there to, to cook it. It really [few words unclear].

R: It must have been pretty hot huh? A couple of hundred, several hundred degrees.

A: Oh yeah. People, they'd have to go in there (--) The ends of the cloth would be uh, held by some sort of clamps as it went through. Every once in awhile if uh, and then in the front it didn't do the job right it wouldn't, it would slip off. And that's what I was suppose to do, straighten out the weave. And it would come off, then the men would have to go in there, the men in the back usually would have to go into this hot box and straighten it out. And that would be really hot. Well if it cooked sausage you know it was hot.

R: Right, right. Uh huh. So they would just go in there with protection?

A: They would go in there, the real hot. No, [R: Asbestos?] real hot. Couldn't stay in there too long. [R: Uh huh] And then the cloth would come out and get on rollers. And they'd be very heavy rollers, rolls of cloth. You know, they'd be uh (--) And there were a lot of Italians that worked there. And they were short. They had to develop good strong muscles to lift those heavy rolls. And [Jean Breeder?] here is, he works for the city here, his father had that job to peel off the rolls.

R: Uh huh. You said (--) Did (--) Were there um (--) Were the jobs divided up ethnically? I mean were they, Italians were in one place, French Canadians another place?

A: No, not necessarily. But uh, there was a certain amount of prejudice against us I feel.

R: Uh huh. Against Italians in particular.

A: They used to call us Warps and things like that, you know. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] But the ones who were doing it were ordinary people. I mean I don't say that they're (--) There were certain (--) Well maybe it was because of the times, competition for the jobs.

R: Yeah, uh huh, uh huh. Um, so, so. But it's not clear to me. How exactly did you get this, how did you manage to get this job after a year of (--)

A: Well I told you. My father was able to convince [R: Right] this super, superintendent [R: to get, uh huh. The super to get (--)] Yeah. [R: Uh huh. Um, and you] I had a friend, I had a very close friend who, he didn't have a father. And there were, his mother was bringing up three or four, maybe four or five children. Now I'll never forget this. And he used to go every day outside the gates there on Marshall Street. He new one man, and every day he'd ask him for a job, you know? He kept it up for weeks on end until finally he got a job inside what they call the "open stalk" in the old Arnold Print Works. That's where they shipped out all the goods. They'd measure and count them, and so forth. This is how this particular friend of mine got his job. I'll always remember that. His persistence [R: Sure] paid off for him.

R: Your job was, in this place where they, where they cured the fabric, or heated the fabric somehow, what exactly was your job? You just did everything around there?

A: Well it, it went through certain rollers. Uh, and what we had to do was straighten out the weave. The weave, after (--) The cloth had come from the washing room downstairs. And when they dried it the weave wasn't straight across. So we'd have to pull on it and uh, and that's how we did it. We usually, they had to move the rollers and sometimes we couldn't uh, do it by just moving the rollers. We'd have to hang on to the cloth.

R: Um, is that the job you kept for [A: all the time I was there, yeah] all the time you were at Arnold Print Works. Um, was there a union at Arnold Print Works, or were you aware whether there was a union or not?

A: There was, yes, I think there was sort of a union, but it was only for the uh, printers, or the engravers. And they were making like I don't know, I never saw their pays, but I understood

they were getting [R: coughs] a hundred dollars a week. And if they were, there was no work for awhile they would get half pay. And uh, a hundred dollars a week in those days is fantastic amount of money.

R: Uh, were no unions. Was there any um, do you recall while you were there, or even if there's something you recall before the time, or after the time you were there, do you recall any kind of labor difficulties at all? It might not necessarily be a strike, could be any kind.

A: No, because as I say, it was a different time. It was depression. We were working and we were happy to be working. [R: Uh huh] And I worked as I say, we were up to about eighty hours a week. We were getting like I think 26 cents an hour. For eighty weeks that was a lot, I mean eighty hours that was a lot of money to us then in those days. And uh, we worked day in and day out. But later on when they went to forty-hours (--)

R: When was that? Roughly?

A: Around 1934 I think, maybe the beginning of '34.

R: That sounds like an NRA [unclear] or something.

A: Yeah, the NRA. And then we made a little bit more money, but our time went way down. So that we were, we might have been making about twenty dollars a week, it went down to uh, I think fourteen which we felt was a big cut in pay, you know, [R: Uh huh, uh huh] because we didn't have that money. But then the only thing is we weren't paid for days off, holidays. There was no such thing as vacation or vacation pay. And there were times we'd come in after we went on NRA, you could come in and you'd find that there was no work, so you'd turn around and go back home. There was no, [R: Uh huh] there was no minimum four hours, [R: Right] or anything like that.

And the other thing that was, when we were working those long hours it was very accustomed that many of the men that worked there would have their children bring them their lunch at noon time. Just at noon time.

R: Was there a cafeteria in the plant?

A: No. [R: No] The people would, all these young kids come from all over, different parts of town, when they got out of school, the minute they got out of school they'd come with their lunch pail and bring it to, a hot dinner to their fathers usually. [R: Uh huh] And they'd all congregate down there at Marshall Street, at the gate house.

R: Uh huh. Um, do you remember during this period of any other strikes or labor difficulties in the area that you might have been aware of?

A: No.

R: Uh, so your worked on this job from '33 until what, around '39, something like that?

A: '36. [R: '36] '36.

R: Until 1930, and that's when you went away to school. Um, what did you think of your bosses, both foreman and supervisors, and people who were higher up, managers? [Unclear] you can speak freely since they've probably all passed away.

A: Well I, I know they are. [R: Chuckles] Uh, well they seemed all right. To me I didn't have any problems with them.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, once you started working what did you do off the job? It was the same thing you had done before? Like you like to go hunting and things like that? What did, how did you spend your time off the job, or did you, felt like you were (--)

A: Well when we uh, when we went on the forty hours, once stretch I was working from eleven to seven. And that was hard for me to work, sleep days. [R: Yeah] And I'd go a good many hours without sleeping. And I'd go hunting a lot. And I figured I'd get tired and then I'd be able to sleep, but I couldn't. When I went on to three to eleven, then I uh, I slept great and I've slept good ever since. But I used to go hunting in the morning. [R: Uh huh] Then sometimes I'd go and work with my father [R: in the tailor shop] in the tailor shop.

R: Um, your friends, where were (--) I mean in this period in your life where were most of your friends from? Were they from your neighborhood, or old school friends, or from the job? Where was, what was your (--)

A: Well.

R: Did you hang out with people, or?

A: Yeah, they'd be a little group of young men that uh, hang around on Main Street a lot. See Main Street was the center in those days. It's like the mall now. And uh, North Adams streets would be crowded on a Saturday night. [R: Uh huh] And you'd congregate and watch [R: the girls going by] [few words unclear]. And uh, they used to have Vaudeville in those days.

R: At the Mohawk, or?

A: No, the Empire. They called it the Empire. It was Paramount afterwards. And it was right where, the lobby was where the Capital Restaurant is now. And they would come out right at night, at nine o'clock at night, right by my father's tailor shop. [Unclear]

R: Uh huh.

A: That's what people used to do, go to the movies a lot. And then they'd have soda shops around. After the movie they'd go there.

R: Uh, could you describe, do you remember what a typical day was like when you worked? What a working day was like? What you did?

A: Well I don't know. I don't remember.

R: You did describe a few incidents and things like that. But sort of you know, sort of what, what did you do in a day.

A: Hung around a lot it seems to me. [Laughs]

R: Hung around on the job?

A: Oh, what do you mean, working?

R: Yes, yeah. Sort of typically, a typical work day. What did you actually do in the course of a workday.

A: Well I'd work at this machine.

R: What was the machine?

A: Well they had these rollers where we straightened out the cloth. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] That's all, that's all we did you know, but uh. And if we had a little time we'd talk with the fellow worker.

R: Um, and so in 1936 was it you got the opportunity to go away to college?

A: Yeah, I went to Bryant then.

R: How did you feel about that?

A: Oh I, I loved it. I enjoyed it.

R: Uh huh. You were glad, were you glad to get out of Arnold, or?

A: Oh yeah. [R: Uh huh] Well I felt I was going to get out anyway, because my brother was through school, and I had had it you know. [R: Uh huh] I thought that it was, I was going to make a change and I didn't know what it was going to be. My family sort of steered me down there. So I went down there.

R: Uh huh. Um,

A: And that was unusual in those days for anybody who had been working to go back to school.

R: Go back to school. Yeah.

A: You nearly never did that.

R: You're right. After the GI Bill I think it became more.

A: Yeah. Though my daughter for example, she quit her job a year ago. She's forty now, and went back to school. [Chuckles]

R: Yeah. Oh, it's very typical I think.

A: Yeah.

R: Um, so then you sent away in '36 you went away to college. Was it four years, three years, two?

A: Two full years. I in from August, to September to August.

R: Oh, right through the summer?

A: Yeah.

R: Uh huh. Uh, and so you were out then by '38, by September of '38 you were back in North Adams and looking for work [A: Yeah] as a book keeper or accountant.

A: Darn right.

R: Uh huh. And you got this job [A: right across the street] right near your father's place.

A: No, right across the street from where I had been working.

R: Right across the street from Arnold Print Works?

A: Arnold Print Works, yeah. I worked for Auto Replacement. And auto parts distributor.

R: Uh huh. And what did you think of that job?

A: Well there again I was happy to have the job. [R: Uh huh] You know what I mean? This is uh, this is the whole thing.

R: Um, and how long did you hold that job?

A: Till 1941, when I went to work for civil service. The end of '41, the civil service down in Washington, D.C.

R: You took a job at Washington?

A: Yeah. The war had started. [R: Uh huh] I had been doing a little accounting work for different small businesses in town here. [R: Uh huh]

R: And so, okay. What, at what point in '41 do you work for the civil, you get a job for the Civil Service Commission

A: Well it was right at the end of the year. And I started to(--)

R: So just around December of '41?

A: Yeah, I started in January.

R: So just as the U.S. enters the war, you get a job with the Civil Service Commission. And you moved to D.C.?

A: Washington, yeah.

R: Uh huh. And how long do you hold that position? Through the war?

A: Well I was there for about eight months and then I was drafted.

R: Uh huh.

A: Then I came back in '46 and went to work there in '46.

R: Uh, what uh, where did you do basic training?

A: Indianapolis. [R: Uh huh] Ford Harrison. [R: Uh huh] It was a finance school.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. And did you, where did you serve then after your basic training?

A: Well I, I went to uh, Taunton, then up to uh, Wakefield, Massachusetts. And then I got to North Africa. I was in [Bazerti?] for a year. And then I went to uh (--)

R: Was it with the Third Army?

A: No, we went apart. My outfit ran apart. We unloaded ships and loaded them up. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] My office paid the troops and paid civilians. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] We handled an awful lot of money there. Then we went to Naples, and we were there till I was, till I got out, over a year and a half.

R: Did you like that?

A: Well uh, what I missed was home. But uh, it was an experience that I would never exchange for anything else.

R: Uh huh. I was wondering about you know, being able to practice your Italian and that sort of thing. Whether that was (--)

A: Well I, I enjoyed Italy. It was very, very good.

R: Uh huh.

A: I didn't like what I saw there. I mean there was too much poverty.

R: Really devastated huh? Yeah.

A: Poverty. And uh, I'll never understand how all those people live there. I, all I could think of is if I had a family how would I support them?

R: Uh huh.

A: Where is the food coming from? Because I saw a lot of the Italians taking our garbage you know, to eat. And uh, and being Italian my buddy, who was also Italian, we'd go around Naples, down to Salerno's, Saranto, all around up towards Rome, and if we got on the train all we'd here is the Italian civilians talking about food. What did you have to eat this morning? You know, what did you do? One, one, part of one winter we didn't go out at all because we, we didn't want to hear that. We didn't want to hear that they were so bad off.

R: So how long were you in the service then, for '46?

A: Yeah, almost three years.

R: Were you in Italy until '46 then?

A: Uh, no, the end of '45 I came home.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. And then you came back here, or back to Washington, or?

A: Oh, I went back to Washington, worked there and married, and stayed there until '48.

R: You were married in Washington?

A: No, out in New Hampshire.

R: Uh huh. Where's your wife from?

A: She's from Adams.

R: Uh huh. Did you meet her here?

A: She was working uh, yeah, I met her fifty years ago the 14th of this month. [R: Uh huh] And we were married on Valentine's Day too. So that we have an anniversary coming up next week. She worked in Boston during the war [R: Uh huh] for the State Police there.

R: So you came back, then you (--) You came back first to Washington? Did you get your job again with the Civil Service Commission? [A: Yeah] And you chose not to keep it, or what, what happened there.

A: Well we decided to come back for various reasons. Uh, I felt my folks were getting old. I had both my god parents had passed away and I wasn't able to come up to the funeral, and it upset me. And then I also suffered from high blood pressure. I was going to the VA every couple of weeks. And uh, I said something is wrong with our living style, or something down there. So we thought we'd move back up here. And uh, I never went back to a doctor for high blood pressure again.

R: Oh, good. Good. It was a smart move, huh?

A: Yeah, I think so.

R: Um, so you came back here and then what uh, you didn't have a job, you just quit your job and moved back here?

A: Yeah, I didn't work for sometime. The twins were born in Worcester.

R: [Unclear] 52/40 over there?

A: No, no. I never took one day of uh (--)

SIDE ONE ENDS
SIDE TWO BEGINS

A: My twins were born in Worcester and uh, then I came back here and worked for an automobile dealer, at Trucker.

R: Um, and is that what you did until you retired, or did you take a succession of jobs?

A: No, then I worked uh, I worked for him for quite a few years. My wife wasn't too well. So I had to be close to her. I felt that I could leave this job and go home whenever she called me. Handling twins is not easy. [R: Yeah] And uh, for awhile there she had trouble walking. Then my friend that I told you about that worked so hard to get his job in the old Arnold Print Works, (--)

R: Was he still there?

A: No, no. He didn't change jobs, but he uh, referred me to a man who is just starting up an office in Stocks and Bonds in Pittsfield. So I went to work for him. I went to work for the New York Stock Exchange Firm [R: Uh huh] as a broker at Pittsfield back about 1962.

R: And you commuted from here to Pittsfield?

A: Oh yeah. [R: Everyday] Well the first few years I didn't. It tried to build up my business around town. And then I, I've commuted ever since.

R: Uh huh. Um, are you still working there?

A: Well I'm semi-retired. I still work. I go down there at least once a week.

R: Uh huh, uh huh.

A: I work for [Shearson?] now.

R: Uh huh. I don't know if you read the article that was in the paper. Did you see [unclear] picture was in the paper a couple, about Friday.

A: Yeah, yeah.

R: Uh, this is something that has a lot of controversy on. In our work people say, oh, you shouldn't ask about it, they don't know what, they won't, you won't get an answer. That's not a good question. But it's just the basic idea of my job. [A: what kind of work do you do?] What question are we looking at? You know that there are five other people who have a position like mine around the state, in Heritage State Parks. Scholars in residence in Holyoke, Fall River, Lawrence, um, Gardner, Black Stone Valley, and here. And the sort of, the general project is called Shifting Gears. And it's sub-title is the Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts 1920-1980. To make this a little narrower, what do you think of the changing meaning of work in Massachusetts, in not Massachusetts, in North Adams 1920-1980? Uh, has the meaning of work changed from 1920 to 1980 in North Adams? Why has it changed? How has it changed? Does it have meaning? I would like you to try and grapple with that, with that question, how has the meaning of work changed in North Adams in the, since 1920?

A: Well I think it's changed a lot. Not only in North Adams, all over. The attitude towards work. [R: Uh huh] I think more the people today feel that they're owed a job and they're owed money for a job, but I don't think they feel that they owe the employer anything. And I don't think, and I don't know that our attitude years ago was much different, and yet there was amongst certain people an attitude, a loyalty towards their employer. And quite often they worked on jobs that they weren't paid that much. For example, I find that, I've found through the years that people that made the most money have been those that have worked for General Electric. The highest, they're the highest paid people in the county, and yet they seem to have less loyalty towards General Electric than (--) In fact a lot of them, they wouldn't even buy the products that they make.

R: Yeah, yeah exactly. Um, [long pause] is there anything else that you would like to add to the tape about anything at all. About your life, about North Adams, about the history of North Adams?

A: Well I love North Adams. [R: Uh huh] And uh, I feel very bad in the sense that a lot of the people that worked here had to work very very hard to accumulate anything. The banks in North

Adams have relatively a lot of cash, but I call it, a lot of it is sweat money, blood money. [R: Uh huh] Because these people in many cases deprive themselves of a lot of things to accumulate this money. And uh, and this is why I think there was a very, in many cases, I don't know why they should have had this fear, insecurity, that's why they saved their money. They didn't save that much, but it still was a lot to them. Maybe it's because of the old immigrants that came here. Maybe that's uh, that's the reason.

R: What do you think, do you have any comments you would like to make? I want to be even narrower than North Adams. Uh, any other comments you would like to make about Marshall Street, or the Arnold Print Works, or your experience there [unclear]?

A: Well I don't know. I'll say this. My brother died about five or six years ago. He was born on Marshall Street. He worked in Sprague's way back in '38 and '39 up at Beaver Street. He drove a truck there. Then he left them and worked over in Williamstown. Then he came back like in 1951 or '52, he worked in the shipping room. Worked himself up. He never graduated from high school. He became the Corporate Traffic Manager, which is a big job. In most companies they've made a lot of money. He had charge of the shipping all over the country for Sprague and International. [R: Uh huh] And he didn't make peanuts. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] He didn't make peanuts. When he retired they told him how good he was. And he says, why didn't you do something before? But I know, because I've read many financial reports, a Corporate Traffic Manager has a responsible job, because he's shipping out all the material that they make, all under his control, all over the world. [R: Uh huh] And because he wasn't a college graduate, they didn't even know that he wasn't a high school graduate, he didn't get the full benefit of his uh (--) He worked there on Marshall Street until he retired, and then he was buried from Marshall Street at uh, Dagnoli's there.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Okay. I mean there are a couple of questions that I would like to ask you off the tape, but basically that covers the kind of issues that I wanted to talk about. And I thank you very much.

END OF TAPE